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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000017

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/PASCUAL/RAMCHAND

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/02/2019

TAGS: [KWBG](#) [IS](#) [PHUM](#) [ECON](#) [EAID](#)

SUBJECT: GAZA CONTACTS DESCRIBE A MISERABLE LIFE UNDER FIRE

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary. A wide selection of Gaza Strip political, business, civil society, academic and NGO contacts report fear of airstrikes, deteriorating conditions, minimal or no electricity, increasing food pressures, and a gloomy outlook for resolution of current hostilities. Several who are strongly opposed to Hamas said they have little hope that Hamas will lose control or change its behavior due to Israel's military operations. End summary.

Gaza PLO ExComm Member: Situation Deteriorating;  
Hamas Unwilling to Return to Ceasefire;  
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12. (C) Gaza City-based PLO Executive Committee member Riyadh al-Khudari (independent, please protect) told PolOff January 2 that he doubts Hamas will accept a mutual cessation of hostilities, as Hamas' objective is permanently reopening the crossings, not halting Israeli attacks or protecting Gaza's population. He said ending the fighting will be difficult, as Hamas has made Gaza into an armed camp and does not fear an Israeli invasion. They are too stubborn, he believes, to agree to a ceasefire that does not include guarantees on the crossings. Al-Khudari said most airstrikes have killed civil police, not Izz al-Din al-Qassam fighters, and, except for Nizar Rayyan, few Hamas leaders have been hit. He said his neighborhood (an upscale part of Shaykh Radwan) has been without electricity for three days, and their house has no heat, with only cooking gas left. Al-Khudari, who is also a university trustee, said all schools and universities in Gaza are closed and will not open anytime soon.

Gaza PLC Member: Outraged at Israeli  
Targeting of Non-Hamas Institutions  
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13. (C) Gaza-based Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) member Rawiya al-Shawwa told PolOff that she and most Gazans are outraged by Israeli targeting of the PLC building, where she and several Fatah PLC members kept offices. She said the building had only recently been completed and complained it was a PA facility, not used by Hamas as a faction, and its destruction is an affront to the PA and delegitimizes the PLC as an institution. She worries that her home in Shuja'iya will be destroyed in fighting, as houses nearby have been bombed by the IAF and it lies on a main avenue of approach to Gaza City from the border with Israel.

Key UN OCHA Contact's House Destroyed,  
Airstrikes Jarring Children  
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14. (C) Hamada al-Bayari, a key Economic/crossings contact, told EconOff January 2 that his house was largely destroyed when IAF ordnance struck a house nearby. He said the bomb targeted a single house but destroyed or heavily damaged all the houses on his street. He said airstrikes are having a

severe psychological impact on his children, who have become distant and distrustful. He said he was fortunate to have relocated his family to an in-laws' house the night before his house was wrecked.

American Corner Director: Situation Terrible  
for the Children; Food Shortages Acute

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15. (C) Gaza City-based Dr. Awni Karzon, Director of Gaza's American Corner, told PDoff January 2 that his house was heavily damaged in IAF strikes on Justice Ministry buildings, and he had to relocate his family to a friend's house. He said his family could not take anything from the remains of his house, and they are sharing food provided by his hosts. The adults are eating little themselves so the children can eat. Most food stores in his area are closed, he said, and few Gazans will venture outside because of airstrikes.

Governor's Office Contact: No Electricity  
for Days, No Confidence Hamas Will Weaken

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16. (C) The Gaza Governor's office manager, a 35-year-old mother who lives in Rimal (northwest Gaza City) near the ocean, said she has had no electricity for three days, and only had a few hours of electricity daily since Israeli airstrikes began on December 27. She said her home has no heat, and her family must simply bundle up throughout the day for warmth. She said she hates Hamas and sympathizes with Israel's need to stop rockets, but commented that she sees little connection between Israel's bombing targets and Hamas,

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and doubts current military operations will weaken Hamas' grip on power.

Democracy Program Manager: Israel Targeting Our  
Civil Infrastructure More than Hamas

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17. (C) Manal al-Bashti, program manager of a USAID-funded civil society/democracy project, told USAID staff that Israeli airstrikes have frequently targeted government institutions, such as the PA Education Ministry building and PLC headquarters, that have no connection to Hamas' military forces or rockets. She commented that Israel's military campaign seemed more directed at destroying Palestinian civil infrastructure than degrading Hamas' capabilities to attack Israel. She said moderates and civilians are suffering the most from the fighting.

AMIDEAST Director: Bombing, Food  
Shortages Threaten Civilians

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18. (C) Gaza AMIDEAST Director Anis Abu Hashim told PDoff January 2 that his multi-story apartment building shook so much from nearby bombings that he worried his home had become structurally unsound. He said his family has had no electricity or water for four days, and must transport jugs of water from street level. He said he does not go outside except when forced to look for food, but on a recent search did not find any stores open except for a donkey cart selling vegetables. He wanted to buy bread, but said the line outside the bakery was at least four hours long, and did not want to risk being exposed during airstrikes.

WALLES